

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-10

PA-03 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 PPT-02

SCA-01 LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01 OC-06 CCO-00 /157 W

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R 110445Z OCT 73

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1810

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, ELAB, PINT, AS

SUBJECT: INDUSTRIAL ACTION POSES FURTHER POLITICAL PROBLEMS
IN POSTAL AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS.

1. SUMMARY: BOB HAWKE IS PRIVATELY PLEASED WITH THE SETTLEMENT OF SYDNEY AIRPORT COMMUNICATORS STRIKE, BUT IS IN A DIFFICULT POSITION ON THREATENED AIRLINE PILOTS STRIKE WHICH COULD CLOSE DOWN ALL AIRPORTS IN AUSTRALIA. LOCAL POLITICAL AND UNION LEADERS CONCERNED WITH PROSPECT OF PILOTS STRIKE HALTING AIR TRANSPORT WHEN AUSTRALIA'S COMMUNICATIONS ARE STILL RECEOVERING FROM DISLOCATIONS OF SYDNEY POSTAL STRIKE, STOREMEN AND PACKERS STRIKE, NSW ELECTRICAL POWER SLOW DOWN, THE OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (OTC) STRIKE AND RELATED DISRUPTIONS AFFECTING AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY. END SUMMARY.

2. STRIKE BY MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSIONAL RADIO EMPLOYEES INSTITUTE (PREI) WHO MAINTAIN NAVAGATIONAL EQUIPMENT AT SYDNEY AIRPORT, PLAYED HAVOC WITH AUSTRALIAN AIR SERVICES THROUGHOUT COUNTRY. PASSENGER FACILITIES AT MELBOURNE'S TULLAMARINE AIRPORT WERE CHAOTIC DESPITE NEAR-HEROIC HANDLING OF INTER-
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NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC FLIGHTS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR SYDNEY.

QANTAS TRANSFERRED EXTRA 200 PERSONNEL TO
HANDLE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS HERE, ALL BUT THREE OF WHICH
HAD BEEN DIVERTED TO MELBOURNE. WITH FAILURE OF SYDNEY
SYSTEMS, MELBOURNE AND BRISBANE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR
AIR CONTROL WITH MELBOURNE EXTENDING ITS CONTROL AREA TO THE
BORDER OF QUEENSLAND SO AS TO COVER NSW. NEW ZEALAND EXTENDED
ITS TRANS-TASMAN CONTROL TO ASSIST DURING THAT CRISIS. EXTRA
EFFORT BY RAILWAYS, BUSES AND TAXIS STILL LEFT FRUSTRATED
TRAVELLERS STRANDED FOR HOURS OR DAYS WITH CONCOMMITANT STRAIN
ON HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS AND TEMPER.

3. BOB HAWKE THROUGH HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTION (AND PROBABLY AS
A RESULT OF CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE ALP
FEDERAL EXECUTIVE MEETING IN ADELAIDE OVER THE PAST WEEKEND) IS
JUSTIFIABLY PROUD OF HAVING SETTLED THE PREI STRIKE IN SYDNEY.
HAWKE JOKINGLY TOLD LABATT OCTOBER 11, ONLY NEW ELEMENT IN DIS-
CUSSIONS WAS "MY ELOQUENCE".

4. HOWEVER, GOA IS NOW FACED WITH THREAT OF PILOTS STRIKE WHOSE
MAIN COMPLAINT IS LABOR MINISTER CAMERON'S PRESSURE ON AIRLINES
MANAGEMENT (QANTAS, ANSETT AND TAA) TO NEGOTIATE AS UNIT IN
LABOR DISPUTES. THE SEVEN AIRLINE OPERATING UNIONS, INCLUDING
AIRLINE PILOTS UNION, FEEL THIS WILL UNDULY INHIBIT UNIONS'
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ABILITIES. AS ALP RESIDENT AND ACTU
PRESIDENT, HAWKE FACES PARTICULAR DIFFICULTY IN SUPPORTING
CAMERON'S POSITION WHICH HAWKE SAYS CONTRAVENES ESTABLISHED ALP
TRADE UNION POLICIES ON FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. AIRLINE
PILOTS ARE MEETING IN MELBOURNE TODAY WITH SIX OTHER OPERATING
AIRLINE UNIONS IN A CRUCIAL EFFORT TO CONSIDER STRIKE.

5. LESS SERIOUS BUT STILL DANGEROUS FOR QANTAS IS THREAT OF
QANTAS STEWARDESSES TO STRIKE FOR PAY INCREASES OF UP TO 49 PER-
CENT.

6. OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION WORKERS STRIKE HAS
SLOWED DOWN TRANSMISSION AND DELIVERY OF OVERSEAS TELEGRAMS
AND HALTED RECEPTION OF LIVE OVERSEAS RADIO AND TV PROGRAMS.
THERE IS NO PRESENT PROSPECT OF RESOLUTION OF THAT STRIKE.

7. PMG HEADQUARTERS HERE REPORTS POSTAL SERVICES RETURNED TO
NORMAL OCTOBER 9, FOLLOWING OCTOBER 4 RESOLUTION OF SYDNEY
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POSTAL STRIKE. DCA OFFICIALS FEEL THAT WITH HAWKE'S
SETTLEMENT OF PREI STRIKE, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AIR
SERVICES SHOULD RETURN TO NORMAL LATE OCTOBER 12, BARRING
NO FURTHER AIRLINE STRIKES.

8. COMMENT: THE 35-HOURS WEEK ISSUE WHICH BASIS OF NSW
ELECTRICAL POWER TROUBLES, AND THE GOA PRESSURE FOR AGREEMENTS
WITH AIRLINES AGAIN PUT MINISTER OF LABOR CAMERON, AND

HAWKE, IN HIS DUAL TRADE UNION-POLITICAL ROLE, ON COLLISION
COURSE. THE FEDERAL LABOR PARTY (ALP) EXECUTIVE MUST HAVE
FACED UP TO THESE QUESTIONS IN PRIVATE, OFF-THE-AGENDA DISCUSSIONS
IN ADELAIDE LAST WEEKEND. DEGREE OF LOYALTY P.M. WHITLAM
FEELS FOR HIS MIN. LABOR, AS WELL AS FOR TRANSPORT MINISTER
JONES AND ENERGY MINISTER CONNOR, WILL AGAIN BE TESTED.
POLITICIANS HERE ARE SPECULATING PUBLIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
WHITLAM AND HAWKE, PAPERED OVER AT ADELAIDE, MAY NOT SURVIVE
NEW STRESS.FLUKER

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